

# THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL

BOOKS I & II

LORD BURGHCLERE







THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL



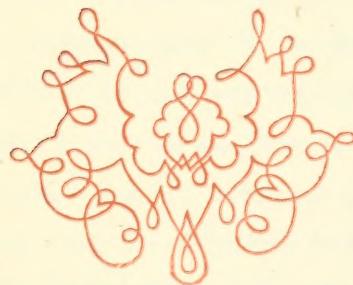
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# THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL

BOOKS I., II.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY LORD BURGHCLERE



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## PREFACE

THE *Georgics* as their Greek name *γεωργικὰ* implies, mainly treat of matters pertaining to husbandry and the cultivation of the soil. The prosaic science of the farmyard would not at first sight seem to present a promising basis for the poet's art. Yet Virgil undertook the task with evident pleasure, and accomplished it with an ease that is the despair of his translators. Nor can it be said that he shrinks in any way from the difficulties in his path. He attacks the commonplaces of the subject with equal courage and success. He deals with the ordinary methods of tillage and forestry, of cattle-breeding and bee-keeping, with an abundant detail and an almost scientific precision. And never once does his verse lose its exalted character; never once does

his style sink from the grand into the grandiose. He uses that most perfect of poetical instruments, the Latin hexameter, with consummate art. He makes it discourse melody with the skill of a master musician. In one passage its rolling harmonies conjure up the clang and crash of the mountain storm, the rush and roar of the flooding torrent, the thunders of Jove himself. In another fauns, nymphs, and all the citizens of Arcady pass across sunny lawns and forest glades to the lighter measure of his strains. In nothing is he common, in nothing is he incomplete. Everywhere the sense is allied to the rhythm—the rhythm to the sense. Truly is he, as Tennyson sang, a “Lord of Language,” in whose marvellous verse-pictures we find

“All the charm of all the Muses  
Often flowering in a lonely word.”

The present translation, begun amidst the bustle of the House of Commons, and completed (as far

## PREFACE

as the first and second books are concerned) in the calm of a Highland lodge, owes no small debt of gratitude to various distinguished critics. If it should be fortunate enough to induce some chance reader to turn from an imperfect English rendering to a closer study of the inimitable original, it will have amply accomplished its mission.

B.

ACHALADER,

*9th December, 1899.*



BOOK I.



# THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL

## BOOK I.

THE art of ample harvests ; what glad star  
Sanctions the timely tillage of the soil  
And bids the marriage of the elm and vine :  
The care of beeves, the charge of teeming flocks,  
The wisdom needed for the thrifty hive ;  
Such, O Maecenas, is the song I sing.

Aid me, ye glorious lights of heaven who guide  
Along the firmament the passing year,  
Bacchus and bounteous Ceres, since your boons

Changed the Chaonian diet of the world  
To ears of lusty corn, and found and blent  
The clustered grape in Acheloan cups.

And ye, O Fauns, the rustics' patron gods,  
O Fauns and Dryad maids, come hand-in-hand  
What time your gifts I sing.

And, Neptune, thou  
Who erst with mighty trident smotest earth  
And lo ! the horse leaped neighing from her side.

Come, Master of the glades, for whose delight  
In Ceos' Isle three hundred snow-white steers  
Crop the lush brake.

And very Pan himself,  
Guardian of flocks, I supplicate. O thou,  
Divine Arcadian ! Quit thy woodland home,  
Thy valleys of Lycaeus : by the love  
Thou bearest to thy Maenalus I pray  
Thy gracious presence.

Come, Minerva, thou  
The olive-maker,  
And the boy who first  
Taught us the curved plough's use,  
Sylvanus too  
Unearth and bear thy dainty cypresses.

And all ye host of heaven, whose loving care  
Defends our fields—or ye who watch the birth  
Of wilding fruits unsown by man, or ye  
Who loose the bounteous floodgates of the sky  
On cultured glebe—Gods! Goddesses! I call.

And thee, O Caesar—who shalt sit a god  
Enthroned with gods—though thy appointed place  
Be yet unknown—whether thou wilt assume  
The governance of cities and the care  
Of continents, whilst, round about thy brow

Binding thy mother's myrtle, the great globe  
Acclaims thee sire of harvests and the lord  
Of sun and shower :

Or whether thou wilt come

God of the boundless sea whose shrine supreme  
The sailor-folk adore, whilst far-away  
Thule obeys thy nod, and Tethys counts  
Her child and all her wealth of billows cheap  
To win thy kinship.

Or perchance shalt thou,

As some strange Star ruling the lazy months,  
Shine forth from heaven where now the Scorpion's  
claws  
Stretch to Erigone. Lo ! he betimes  
Withdraws his fiery grasp and yields thee up  
A generous space of sky more than thy meed.

Whiche'er thou wilt—for surely Tartarus  
Is hopeless of thy reign, nor thou thyself

Consumed with such fell lust of power (although  
True 'tis the Greeks vaunt their Elysian fields,  
And Proserpine for all her mother's prayers  
Clung to the world below)—whiche'er thou wilt,  
O make my pathway smooth, and deign to bless  
My rash emprise ; and, pitying with me  
These husbandmen who wander leaderless,  
Stay not thine instant coming, but be prompt  
To school thine ears to mortal litanies.

When springtime comes and brings the warm west  
wind,  
When from the hoary-headed mountain streams  
The molten ice, and all the clodded fields  
Crumble and thaw, then let my plough be set  
Deep in the tilth, my straining oxen groan,  
And stubborn furrows make the ploughshare flame  
With a new splendour.

Best that land rewards  
Your thrifty farmer's vow which twice the sun  
And twice the frost has felt. For him forthwith  
Shall be a mighty garnering and his barns  
Bursting with grain.

But first our care must be,  
Or ever we would drive the iron share  
Athwart the glebe in some new plain, to learn  
What winds are wont to blow ; the character  
And variance of the skies ; the ancient arts  
And virtues of the soil ; and eke what crops  
This land is apt to bear, and that refuse.  
How here the corn springs kindlier—there the vine,  
And otherwhere wild grasses and young trees  
Wax verdurous.

Look you, how Tmolus sends  
Its perfumed saffron ; India ivory ;  
Her native incense soft Arabia ; steel

The bare-armed Chalybes ; Pontus again  
Rank-odoured castor ; and Epirus' sons  
Their breed of mares famed for Olympian palms.

So ever has it been since nature set  
Upon earth's several climes her seal eterne  
Of primal law. Since that old time when first  
With stones Deucalion strewed an empty globe,  
And man, hard as the rock, upsprang.

Come, then,  
And in the early springtime of the year  
See that the lusty oxen till your lands  
Where they lie richest, that the upturned clods  
May bask and ripen in the timely suns  
Of dusty summer ; but where poor they lie  
It will suffice to skim September fields  
With shallow furrowings. Lest weeds arise,  
On the one hand, and choke our smiling crop ;

Or, on the other, barren thirsty soils

Be left of their scant dew.

Mark this again,

Each other year let your shorn stubbles stay

In restful fallow, so the languid land

May strengthen in its sloth ; or, if ye will,

Beneath another sun sow golden grain

Where once the bean-field shook its copious pods,

Or lank young vetches and harsh lupines grew,

A very rustling grove of fragile stems.

Whether your harvests be of flax, or oats,

Or pale Lethaeon poppy drenched with sleep,

Their constant yield shall scorch the land. Although

Your task will lighten when crops interchange.

And shrink not aye to glut the arid glebe

With the rich farmyard soil, and broadcast fling

O'er your sick acres the uncleanly ash.

Thus in a shift of seeds your lands may take  
Rest as in idleness, nor cease the while,  
As fallows must, their grateful recompense.  
And often you will find it well to burn  
The garnered fields and set the flimsy straw  
A-crackling in the flames. Whether perchance  
The land in this wise finds some unknown force,  
Some fat enrichment; or that every fault  
Thereof is purified by fire and all  
The useless humours purged; or that the heat  
By its own virtue loosens secret pores  
And paths unseen whereby the sap may flow  
To the young grasses; or, it may be, binds  
Firmer the earth, and knits the gaping veins,  
Lest showers should subtly harm, or the fierce sun  
With a too passionate majesty consume,  
Or the bleak north winds sear with piercing cold.

Who with his mattock breaks the sleepy clods  
And harrows them with hurdles osier-twined  
Shall largely serve the land ; nor such a one  
Does golden Ceres with indifference eye  
From her Olympian heights ; he too does well  
Who drives the furrow through the glebe and then  
With a cross-ploughing cleaves the up-turned plain,  
And tireless disciplines the ground, and rules  
Right royally his fields.

Pray, husbandmen,  
For summer showers and tranquil winter-time ;  
The dust of winter days shall fill the land  
With joy, and with a joy most great the corn ;  
Never shall Mysia vaunt her tilth so high  
And even Gargarus look with wonderment  
Upon his granaries.

And what of him  
Who hurls the seed, and soldier-wise pursues  
The onslaught, grappling the soil, and scattering

The masses of lean sand? Then to his crop  
Summons the flood and leads the attendant rills,  
So when the burning fields are all aglow  
And the herb meet to die, see! from the brink  
Of its steep path he woos the watercourse.  
Hither it tumbles hoarsely murmurous  
And wakes the way-worn stones and, bubbling on,  
Quenches the thirsty plain.

Or him again

Who, lest beneath the over-laden ears  
The haulms be bowed, crops the rank herbage down  
In its young leaf, what time the tender growth  
First tops the trenches:

Or of him who strives

With bibulous sand to suck the stagnant ooze  
Out of the marsh, and finds his special task  
When in some changeful moon the rivers rise  
In turbulent flood, till far and wide the slime

Covers the land, and all the channelled dikes  
Sweat with a faint warm reek?

Yet after all,

Ply as we may our arts, toil as we may,  
Both man and beast, till and re-till the ground,  
No jot the less do we endure the plague  
Of the Strymonian crane or noxious goose,  
Or bitter-rooted endive, or the bane  
Chill shadows cast around.

So hath he willed,

The great All-father, that we husbandmen  
Might tread no easy path, since he it was  
Who earliest woke the meadows with our craft,  
And made our cares the whetstone of our wits,  
Nor suffered drowsy sloth to dull his realm.

Before Jove reigned no farmer tilled the soil ;  
Nor was it meet to set a landmark up  
And part the plain. Men sought but common ends ;

And mother earth with freer hand unasked  
Gave of all things to all.

Then Jove bestowed  
A baleful venom on the sable snake.  
He bade the wolf to prowl, the sea to rise ;  
He shook their dewdrop honey from the leaves,  
And hid the fire, and curbed the common flow  
Of rivers running wine : and this he did  
That necessary custom slow and sure  
Should forge the diverse arts by dint of thought,  
And in the furrows find the springing corn,  
And strike the spark that lurks in living flint.

Then first the hollowed alder smote the flood ;  
And sailors told the number of the stars  
And called them by their names : the Pleiades,  
The Hyads, and Lycaon's flaming Bears.  
Then did men learn the art of snaring game,

The trick of bird-lime, and with circling hounds  
To ring wide forest glades. And these cast nets  
Where the pools deepen in the spacious stream,  
Whilst these trailed dripping meshes in the sea.  
Then came cold iron and the saw's shrill blade,  
Since man till then with wedges clove his logs.

Such the procession of the various crafts.  
For toil—relentless toil—is lord of all,  
And want and trouble ever prick us on.

But when the day came that the holy groves  
Failed of their acorn and their arbutus,  
So that Dodona's self denied us food,  
Ceres it was who taught the human-folk  
How first with iron share to till the land.

Yet straightway trouble falls upon the wheat ;  
A plague of mildew eats up all the straw,

And wastrel thistles through the fields uprear  
Their horrent spikes. The crops begin to die ;  
Along the ground there creeps a tangled growth  
Of caltrops, cleavers, and their kind. Then up,  
Lording it o'er the glittering harvest, spring  
Harsh darnels and wild barren oats.

And thus,

Unless you chase the weeds with constant hoe,  
And scare the birds, and prune the darkening shade,  
And with your prayers draw showers from heaven—  
alas !

Your lot shall be with vainly covetous eye  
To watch your neighbours pile their ricks, and then  
Go fill your empty belly in the woods  
Under the shaken oaks.

Now must I tell

What weapons our stout husbandmen should use,  
Since without tools no seed-time can there be  
Nor harvest-time.

First have we, then, the plough,  
With frame of toughest timber bent, the share,  
The wains of Ceres with their lumbering wheels,  
And sleds, and drags, and huge unwieldy rakes ;  
Nor Celeus with his equipage forgot  
Plain wicker though it be, and harrows knit  
With arbute-wood, and thy mysterious fan,  
Iacchus.

Whoso worthily would win  
And wear the glory of the sacred fields,  
All these should mind in ample time to store.

Now in the forest bend the living elm  
With thy full vigour, beam-wise moulding it  
Into the curved shape of a plough ; and fit  
Hard-by its end a pole eight feet in length,  
Twin earth-boards, and a share-stock double-backed.

But first the linden must be felled to form  
Your lightsome yoke, the lofty beech your helve  
Whereby the plough's deep courses may be steered ;  
And beech and linden hang above the hearth  
So that their woods may season in the smoke.

Full many an ancient maxim can I tell,  
An you budge not, nor deem it petty work  
Too irksome to be learned.

And first, forsooth,  
Make smooth with cylinders of mighty bulk,  
Your threshing-floor ; let it be wrought by hand  
And knit with potter's clay right solidly,  
Lest weeds creep through, and so the crumbling soil  
Wear into cracks and chinks, and furnish sport  
For all our plagues in turn. The tiny mouse  
Burrows full oft her subterranean home

And builds her granaries : the purblind mole  
Shall scrape her bed: or in his cave you'll find  
The toad, and all the monstrous spawn of earth ;  
Nor shall your ample store of corn escape  
The weevil's havock, or the ant who dreads  
A treasure-less old age.

Hearken again,  
When you shall mark the almond in the woods  
Pranked with a myriad blooms, its branches bent  
Heavy with fragrance, and the baby fruits  
Wax plentiful, lo ! then shall come to pass  
A harvest of like fashion, and a time  
Of mighty heat and mighty winnowing ;  
But if the wealth of shade be wealth of leaves  
And leaves alone, then shall you vainly smite  
Your threshing-floor and find the gravid ears  
Yield naught but empty chaff.

And many a time  
I have seen farmers drug the seeds they sow,  
Steep them in nitre and black olive-lees,  
That by-and-by the else-delusive pods  
May bear right ample burden, and a fruit  
Which cooks apace, e'en though your fires be scant.

Yet can I witness that the plant declines,  
Though long-time chosen, conned with utmost care,  
If human energy and human hands  
Fail to search out the fittest year by year.

So are we doomed to speed from bad to worse,  
Ever borne backwards, drifting whence we came,  
As one whose oars can scarcely hold his boat  
Against the stream, who haply slacks his grip.  
Then headlong down the torrent is he swept  
By the mid-flood.

And list ye well to watch  
Arcturus' star, the Birthday of the Kids,  
The shining Snake, with eyes as keen as those  
Of homing mariners whose stormy course  
Hazards the Euxine and the narrow straits  
Of oyster-famed Abydos.

When the Scales

With equal poise have meted day and sleep  
And cleft the round world in twin moieties  
Of light and shade, then up, my masters, up  
And speed your steers, and barley broadcast fling  
E'en to the verge of winter's surly storms.

Now is the time to sow your crops of flax  
And Ceres' poppy, and full time to strain  
Over your ploughs, whilst yet dry earth permits  
And clouds unbroken float across the sky.

Spring is the seed-time of the bean ; in spring  
The ripened furrows welcome Media's plant,  
And millet claims our yearly care, what time  
Comes with his golden horns the silver Bull  
And opes the year's procession, and the Dog  
Faces the hostile Star and ceding sinks.  
But if you tax your soil for hardy spelt  
And wheaten harvests, and your zeal be set  
On corn alone, then let the Pleiades  
Melt with the dawn, and Ariadne's Crown  
Pass with its ardent star, ere you entrust  
Your furrows with the necessary seed,  
Or, heedless, risk the year's expectancy  
To an unready earth.

Many begin  
To sow ere Maia sets ; but oft their hopes,  
When harvest comes, are mocked with empty ears.

Nathless, if you be pleased to sow the vetch  
Or vulgar phasel, nor despise the care  
Of the Pelusian lentil, then for you  
Boötes at his setting gives the sign  
With no uncertain light. Up and begin !  
And cease not seed-time till mid-winter comes.

For to this purpose doth the golden sun  
Order his round meted in several terms  
By the twelve constellations of the world.  
Five Zones possess the heavens, and one thereof  
Glows scarlet with the lustre of the sun  
For aye, and aye with the sun's fire is scorched ;  
Whilst far away on utmost right and left  
Stretch to the distant poles two frozen tracts,  
Sea-green with ice, and black with murky storms ;  
And other twain 'twixt these and the mid-zone  
The gods vouchsafed in grace to weakling men,

And slant-wise carved between them both a way  
Whereon the due procession of the signs  
Should wheel.

Mark how beyond Rhipoean peaks  
The world towers steep to the north, but southward  
sinks

Sheer down to Libya. High above our heads  
One pole for ever soars ; the other views  
Dark Styx and spectres of the nether world  
Under our feet.

The mighty Snake above  
Like to a river winds his sinuous coil  
Around—between the Bears, the Bears who shun  
The touch of Ocean.

And below, 'tis said,  
Eternal night in timeless silence broods  
Wrapped, as a pall, in ever-deepening gloom ;

Or else from us Aurora journeys back  
Thither, and there re-lumes the day, and so  
Whilst we are freshened with the morning breath  
Of sunrise horses panting up the sky,  
There ruddy Vesper lights his twilight torch.

And thus it is we learn betimes to tell  
The wayward changes of the sky, and mark  
Seed-time and harvest-time, and when it fits  
To dip our oars into the treacherous calm  
And launch our furnished fleets, and when to fell  
The timely Forest Pine.

Ay, not in vain

We watch the birth and death-day of the Signs,  
And the Four Seasons, diverse each from each,  
That make the perfect year.

If now and then  
The chill rains keep the husbandman at home,  
How many a task doth he fulfil at ease,

Which, did the sun shine, would be scamped apace.  
The ploughman hammers at the hardened fang  
Of his blunt share, scoops wine-tubs out of trees,  
Or brands his flock, or stamps his numbered sacks.  
Whilst others sharpen stakes and two-pronged forks,  
Or twist Amerian osiers into bonds  
To curb the trailing vine.

Others, again,  
Are busy weaving baskets from the shoots  
Of limber thorn.

No time than this more meet  
To roast your grain, or grind it at the mill.  
Why on the very Festivals themselves  
Some work at least nor gods nor men forbid :  
The saintliest conscience scruples not to tap  
The flooded watercourse, or fence the corn,  
Or snare the birds, or burn the briars, or plunge  
Your bleating flocks into the wholesome brook.

And often comes the peasant with his ass  
Crawling from market, heavy-laden, home  
With apples in cheap plenty on its back,  
Or oil, or pitch, or mill-stones deftly hewed.

And for our craft moon after moon vouchsafes  
Days in an ordered measure of good luck.  
Beware the fifth: for on the fifth were born  
The Furies and wan Orcus, King of Death:  
And with unholy travail did the earth  
Iapetus and Caeus bear and him,  
The fell Typhoeus, all the Titan brood  
Who banded for the downfall of high heaven.  
Thrice did they strive, and strive forsooth to pile  
Ossa on Pelion, and on Ossa's height  
Again to heave Olympus with her woods;  
And thrice the Father with his lightning smote  
And scattered far and wide the mountain mass.

Add seven to ten : that day shall haply fall  
To plant your vineyards, or to train your steers,  
Or wed the warp and woof ; the ninth again  
Smiles upon truancy, but frowns on theft.

And many a task, I wot, will better fare  
In the cool night-watch, or at break of day  
When all the fields are drenched with morning dew.  
By night crisp stubble-land and drouthy mead  
Are kindlier mowed : for on the math there falls  
No lack of suppling moisture with the night.

And one I knew would work in winter-tide  
The livelong night beside the flickering fire,  
To fashion torches with his keen-edged blade.  
The while his good wife sung the time away  
Over her task and drove athwart the web  
Her glancing shuttle, or with vine leaf skimmed

The luscious must that simmered in the pot  
And cooked above the flame.

But the red corn  
Is reaped in noonday heat, and at mid-noon  
We thresh the ripened ears. Stripped must we plough  
And stripped must sow. 'Tis chilly winter brings  
Our holidays, when farmers with the frost  
Are chiefly busied to enjoy their gains,  
Make merry with their gossips, and rejoice  
In mutual junketings. Lo ! winter calls  
And, jovial, bids us cast our cares away ;  
As mariners, whose burdened argosy  
Rides safe at last in port, full of content  
Garland their ship with flowers.

Winter's the time  
To strip the oak-tree of its mast and cull  
Red myrtle and the olive and the bay,

Set snares for cranes and nets to trap the stag,  
Hunt long-eared hares, and whirl your hempen sling  
To strike the deer with Balearic bolt,  
When snows lie deep in drifts, when all the streams  
Hurtle with ice.

And haply must I sing  
Of autumn stars and autumn's fitful mood,  
And what our husbandmen must watch and ward  
When the days shorten and hot summer wanes?  
Or when the spring pours down her wealth of showers  
On fields of tremulous wheat, or grass-green corn  
That burgeons with the milky grain?

How oft,  
Just as the farmer calls his men afield  
To reap his golden acres, and begins  
Himself to lop the brittle barley haulm,  
Have I not seen the embattled winds arise  
And surge and clash in universal war,

Uproot wide stretches of the ripened grain  
And toss them to the sky ; whilst round and round  
In the black eddies of the storm there whirls  
Swift flight of stalks and straws.

And oft again

The floods of heaven in endless squadrons come,  
Muster the clouds from far and near and mass  
In one grim tempest all the murky rains :  
Down falls the deluge : down the firmament  
Tumbles its torrent-streams, and sweeps away  
All our glad harvest, all our oxen's toil ;  
The dikes fill up, the rivers in their beds  
Roar as they rise, and every creek of the sea  
Frets with the angry panting of the waves.

And he, the Father, girt in midnight clouds  
Hurls with an arm of fire his thunderbolts ;  
And the great world doth quake ; and wild beasts flee,  
And hearts of human-folk sink low with fear ;

And when with flaming brand he strikes the peak  
Of Athos, Rhodope, or high Ceraun,  
The winds redouble and the storm apace  
Thickens ; and now the woodland, now the shore,  
Wails with each giant blast in agony.

And since this dread is ever thine, watch well  
The seasons of the heavens and their signs :  
What coign of space cold Saturn's star affects ;  
Along what orbit fiery Mercury roams.

And most of all adore the gods ; and when  
Late winter wanes, and gentle spring is here,  
Haste in some pleasant mead to celebrate  
Those yearly rites which mighty Ceres claims.  
For wine is ripest then, and lambs are fat ;  
And sweet is sleep amidst well-shaded hills.

So call thy country youth and bid them pray  
To Ceres for thee, blending to her joy  
Milk and the honeycomb and mellow wine.  
And three times let the kindly victim go  
Round the green corn, and all thy merry band  
Shout as they follow, calling Ceres down  
To dwell with us. Nor when the harvest comes  
Let any put his sickle to the awn,  
Ere crowned with oaken leaves he joins in song  
And rustic dance to do our Ceres grace.

And that we might foretell by certain signs,  
Or heat, or rain, or winds that speed the frost,  
The mighty Father has himself ordained  
The warnings of the moon month after month :  
What tokens mark the lull of southern blasts,  
And what the signals—noted oft—that bid  
The farmer keep his cattle nigh the byre.

See, when a gale springs up, how on the nonce  
The instant anger of the troubled deep  
Foams in the friths and all the mountains ring  
With clang and crash ; meanwhile the distant shore  
Throbs with tumultuous echoes and anon  
A murmurous crowd of voices fills the woods.  
And now the billows scarce can stay their dash  
On hull and keel, what time the speedy gulls  
Wing screaming from mid-ocean to the shore,  
The sea-fowl make a playground of the glebe,  
The herons flying from their fenny haunts  
Float high above the clouds.

And you shall see  
Full often, when the wind is close at hand,  
The stars themselves shoot headlong from the sky ;  
And as they trail their long-drawn tracks of flame  
Silver the sable night ; often again  
Dead leaf and flimsy chaff fly here and there,  
Or frolic feathers skim across the wave.

But when the region of the truculent North  
Blazes with lightning, and the thunder shakes  
Eurus' and Zephyr's dwelling-place alike,  
Then dikes are full, and all the country-side  
Swims with the flood, and mariners at sea  
Furl their wet sails.

For never yet did rain  
Strike any man unwarned : or he might note  
Cloud-loving cranes, when storms begin to brew,  
Swoop to the abysmal shelter of the vale,  
Or mark the heifer gazing at the sky  
With broadening nostrils scent the troubled breeze,  
Or flashing swallow flit around the mere,  
Or in the marsh frogs chant their ancient plaint.

And many a time the thrifty emmet bears  
Out of her secret store-houses her eggs  
By narrow well-worn pathways, or on high

A giant rainbow drinks the dew, or now  
The army of the rooks with serried wings  
Jangle and jar as in a long array  
They quit their feeding-grounds.

Anon there come

Tribes of the sea-fowl (such as quest for food  
In Asian fields by fair Cayster's pools)  
And jostle one another as they crowd  
To toss the dewdrop water plenteously  
Over their feathered sides, and now they dip  
Their heads beneath the waves, and now they run  
Into the tide, and revel in their bath  
For very wantonness.

And you shall mark

The impish raven stalk the shore apart,  
And with a mighty caw invoke the rain.  
Even the maidens working round the lamp  
O' nights foretell a tempest, when the oil

Sputters and sparkles and great mushroom growths  
Gather along the wick.

Nor are less clear

The signs of cloudless calms and sunny skies  
Than the storm heralds : for the stars shall show  
Like chiselled discs, and the moon rise unstained  
By any borrowed splendour of the sun,

Nor lank cloud-fleeces float across the sky :

Nor Thetis' darling fowl, the Halcyons,  
Towards the waning sunlight on the shore  
Unfurl their wings, and the uncleanly swine  
Forget to toss their litter to and fro.

The mist descends and broods along the plain,  
The owl on the gable keeps her sunset watch  
And plagues the night with ineffectual hoot.

And on the crystal air there soars in sight  
Nisus, and she who chastisement must reap,  
Scylla, for rapine of the purple lock.

And wheresoever with her fugitive wings  
She cleaves the breeze, lo ! on the wind there sails  
With shrilly clamour close upon her track  
Nisus the foe, Nisus the terrible.

And wheresoever Nisus mounts the wind,  
Lo ! Scylla flutters as with fugitive wings  
She cleaves the breeze.

The rooks in bated tones

Thrice and again repeat a softened note,  
And you shall hear them in their roost above  
Chattering to one another in the leaves,  
Thrilled with I know not what mysterious charm.

And the storm spent, how gleefully they hie  
Home to their callow youngsters in the nests.  
And this they do, methinks, not that the gods  
Have portioned them some special gift, or fate  
Bestowed a deeper sense of things to be ;

But, when the storm and fitful mists of heaven  
Shift in their course and Jove with gale and shower  
Contracts the rarer atoms and makes rare  
The dense, then do their spirits suffer change,  
And other pulses stir their hearts awhile,  
Other than when the wind-tost clouds were rife.  
And thence the wild bird's chorus in the fields,  
And thence the gladness of the kine, and thence  
The Paean of the rooks.

But the swift suns  
And the procession of the moons watch well,  
So shall the morn not fool you, nor the night  
Trap with her tranquil snares.

For if the moon  
With a blurred crescent frame the darkling air,  
Ploughmen and mariners be warned in time  
A mighty rain is nigh ; but if her face

Maidenlike mantles with a blush, the wind  
Is near; since alway Phoebe's tender gold  
Turns ruby in the wind. Ye well may trust  
The counsel her fourth birthday brings, and if  
Pure and unstained she sail across the sky  
With flawless crescent, lo! that livelong day  
Ay, and the days that it begets, shall pass  
Windleſſ and rainleſſ till the month be gone,  
And sailors safe on shore to Panope,  
Glaucus, and Melicertes, Ino's son,  
Shall pay their vows.

And signs the sun shall give

Orient, and when he plunges in the waves.  
The sureſt signs attend the sun, or those  
He brings with early morn, or with the stars.

When, shrouded in the mist, a demi-orb,  
He flecks with dappled hues the birth of day,

Beware the rain ; for speeding from the sea  
Comes Notus, foe to branch and blade and beast.  
Or when his morning rays loom through a mass  
Of riven cloud, or when the dawn appears  
Pale from the saffron chamber of her lord,  
Lo ! sorry safeguard shall your vine leaves prove  
To the ripe grape ; so fierce the clattering hail  
Shall dance upon the roofs.

But even more,  
Methinks, than all of these, his journey done,  
It boots to mark the fashion of his flight.  
For often then do variant colours pass  
Across his face ; whereof a scarlet flame  
Warns us of wind, and purple dusk of rain.  
But if the dusk and crimson fire be blent,  
Then rain and wind and storm alike shall rage  
In universal broil. Let no man say  
That I should put to sea on such a night,  
Or loose my cable from its anchorage.

But if, whene'er he gives us back the day,  
Or veils the gift again, his orb shine clear,  
Then of a truth the clouds shall frown in vain,  
And tree-tops rustle in the bright north wind.

And so, in fine, what tale the twilight tells,  
Or what fair breeze shall blow the clouds away,  
Or what the purpose of the wet south wind,  
All these the sun shall show. And who dare call  
The sun false seer?

Nay, more, he oft foretells  
The march of black revolt, and the ferment  
Of underground rebellion.

Who but he,  
In pity for dead Caesar and for Rome,  
Shrouded his splendour in a lurid gloom,  
Whilst an unholy world looked on aghast,  
Dreading eternal night?

Those were the days,  
Forsooth, of portents from the land and sea,  
Ill-omened dogs, and birds of doom.

And oft  
Did we not view the riven furnaces  
Of Etna roll their seething waves along  
The country of the Cyclops, flooding forth  
In streams of molten rock and spheres of flame !  
And all the sky of Germany was filled  
With noise of battle ; and strange shudders shook  
The mountain Alps.

And up and down the land,  
Cleaving the silence of the sacred groves,  
Sounded a voice of marvel, and there came  
In the dusk twilight shadows of the dead  
Wondrously pale ; and O ! the horror of it !  
Beasts spake like men.

The rivers ceased to flow,  
And the earth opened, and great drops of sweat  
Gathered upon the bronzes in the fanes,  
And sculptured ivory shed grievous tears ;  
Whilst with his frenzied flood Eridanus,  
The prince of rivers, whirled the woods away,  
And swept the cattle and their byres alike  
Across the vasty plain.

And in those days  
The ominous entrails of the sacrifice  
Ceased not to threaten, and the wells ran blood,  
And in the city street there rang o' nights  
The howl of the wolf.

And down a fleckless heaven  
Streamed untold thunderbolts, and doomful stars  
Past numbering.

Then did Philippi see  
Twice in unnatural combat Rome meet Rome,  
And hear the clash of kindred swords ; and twice  
The plains of Thrace and Macedon drank deep  
Of Roman blood : and the gods deemed it just.

So in those regions shall it come to pass,  
That ploughmen, as they till the massy earth,  
May light on Roman spears time-worn with rust ;  
Or with a clumsy mattock strike perchance  
Some dead man's morion, and then view aghast  
The giant bones within their cloven tomb.

Gods of our fatherland ! Gods of our homes !  
O Romulus and Mother Vesta, hear !  
Guardians of Tiber and the Palatine !  
Grant that this royal youth, who still is ours,  
Become the saviour of a ruined world !

Forbid it not! For surely long ago—  
Ay, to the full—our blood has washed away  
The guilt of Troy and false Laomedon.  
And long ago the envious halls of heaven  
Have pined for Caesar, making as their plaint  
That he should heed the triumphs of this world,  
A world forsooth where wrong and right are blent,  
A world that teems with war, a world that reeks  
With countless crime, where evermore the plough  
Lacks its due honour, and the hind is forced  
Far from his desolate fields, and reaping-hooks  
Are straightened into swords.

Lo! to the East

The tumult of Euphrates, to the West  
Germania cries for war, and close at hand  
Our neighbour cities break their leaguèd troth  
And rush to battle! Fratricidal Mars  
Rages from pole to pole.

So chariots

Bound from the bars and dash along the course,  
Vainly the driver draws the bit, his steeds  
Whirl him where'er they will ; and thus the car  
Speeds to its goal unheedful of the rein.

BOOK II.



## BOOK II.

So far of tillage and the sovereign stars.  
Now be my song of Bacchus, nor forget  
His bosky thickets and the fruit that decks  
The tardy olive.

Come, Lenaean ! come,  
Lord of the winepress, Father of the vine !  
For now is nature laden with thy boons,  
And by thy bounty all the joyous earth  
Teems with the grape-clad autumn, and the vats  
Foam with the brimming vintage :

Bacchus, come !  
Lord of the winepress, Father of the vine !  
Strip off thy buskins, bare thy comely feet  
And plunge knee-deep into the purple must.

First will I tell of trees and bid you mark  
The manifold order of their birth.

How some  
Spring into being, spreading far and wide  
At no man's asking, of their own intent ;  
And fill the meads and fringe the winding streams.  
Such are the poplars, such the pliant broom,  
The supple osier, and the sea-green groves  
Of leafy willows whitening in the wind.

Others again are born of scattered seeds :  
The lofty chestnut, and the oak who bears  
Jove's glory in his boughs, the forest king ;  
And kindred groves from whose oracular leaves  
Greece hears her fate.

And some there are, like elms  
And cherry-trees, around whose fostering roots  
A very thicket springs of youngling plants :

Even so the baby laurel of the Muse  
Nestles beneath its mother's ample shade.

This was primeval nature's plan : and hence  
Sprang all the verdurous glory of the woods,  
Of leafy boscage and of holy grove.

But by-and-by men happed on other ways,  
Which practised art in time made manifest,  
And rent from off the delicate mother stem  
The fresh young slips and set them trench by trench ;  
Or planted out the ground with poles, or stocks  
Cleft quarterwise, or sharpened stakes.

Again,  
Some kinds there are who bide the archèd growth  
Of their sunk scions, and the shoots that spring  
Quick of their quick out of a common soil ;

Or of their roots ask naught, whose topmost spray  
The gardener in his pruning scruples not  
To render trustfully to mother earth.

See, too, the marvel of the olive branch  
How from its sapless timber, dry and hewn,  
Issues a living root.

And you may mark  
Trees innocently interchange their boughs :  
So pears transformed yield apples ; plum-trees glow  
With stoney cornel-fruit incarnadine.

Come, then, to work, my husbandmen, and learn  
How in their several kinds our plants are reared,  
Mellow the wilding fruits with skilful toil,  
And scorn to let your acres waste in sloth.  
Think you what joy was his who bade the vine  
Teem upon Ismarus and clothed Taburne  
With one vast raiment of grey olive groves.

And thou, Maecenas, lustre of my life,  
Who art the sovereign partner of my fame,  
I pray thy presence, one with me partake  
This new emprise, and towards the broadening deep  
Unfurl thy swelling sails.

And yet, methinks,  
I scarce can hope to compass all my aim  
Within this verse. No! though a hundred tongues  
Were mine, and mine a hundred mouths, and mine  
A voice of bronze!

So let our galley glide  
Around the fringes of the shore. Behold!  
The land is near; nor will I stay our course  
With poet's fantasy, or tedious phrase.

Various the nature of the forest tribes.  
Some, to the luminous province of the sky

¶ Though towering self-begot, are void of fruit,  
Yet hale and lusty, since in mother earth  
A certain native virtue ever dwells.  
  
Nathless, if you ingraft the barren branch,  
Or in some trench, tilled by laborious spade,  
Plant them anew, lo ! even these shall shift  
Their wildwood temper, nor be slow, when schooled,  
To follow wheresoe'er your science calls.

And likewise so the sterile shoots, that grow  
Round the deep-rooted boles, shall bear betimes,  
If one by one they spaciously are set  
O'er ample fields. Else ever does the shade,  
Cast by their giant mother's verdurous gloom,  
Filch the young buds and blight the timely yield  
Worn with endeavour.

## Trees that spring chance-born

Wax sluggishly, whose leafy shade abides  
Our unborn heirs; even thus the dwindling fruit  
Forgets its ancient virtue, and the vine  
Bears sorry grapes meet but for larcenous birds.

And so we see toil's tribute must be paid  
For all alike, and all in trenches ranked,  
And all by labour diligently trained.

Methinks the olive best repays our care  
When bred from parent stocks, the grape from slips,  
And Paphian myrtle from the perfect trunk.  
From shoots tough hazel springs, and mighty ash,  
Poplar, whose leafage crowns Alcides' brow,  
And the Chaonian acorn dear to Jove.  
So the proud palm is born, and thou, O fir,  
Who in due time shalt brave the perilous sea.

But by ingraftment prickly arbute bears  
Harvest of almonds; barren plane trees teem  
With lusty apples; beech and rowan bloom  
All silver with the petals of the pear  
And snowy chestnut; whilst beneath the elms  
Swine munch their full of acorns.

But the arts  
Of budding and ingraftment are not one.  
For mark you where amidst the bark of the stem,  
Bursting their filmy tunics, buds peer forth  
How gardeners carve a tiny lurking-place  
In these same nodes; wherein they prison germs  
Plucked from some stranger tree, and bid them wax  
One with the sappy rind.

But when they graft,  
The knotless trunk is lopped, and ways are cleft

With wedges to the core ; where fecund slips  
Are straightway set ; and in a little while,  
Lo ! a vast tree, with ample boughs bedecked,  
Leaps to high heaven, and marvels at strange leaves,  
Strange fruit—her own yet not her own.

Again

No kind of tree is single in itself—  
Lotus, nor willow branch, nor lusty elm,  
Nor Cretan cypress ; neither changelessly  
Do unctuous olives grow—oblong are some,  
Some shuttle-shaped, and others plucked unripe ;  
Nor do the orchards of Alcinous,  
Whether of Crustumine or Syrian pears  
Or ponderous Wardens, spring from selfsame shoots ;  
Nor in the vineyards of Methymnia  
Does Lesbos gather vintages like those  
Which wreath the Latin trees.

Of grapes we know

White Mareotic, and the Thasian,

(These for stiff soils, and those for lighter apt)

Psithians more meet for raisin wine, Lagenes,

Whose subtle juice anon betrays the feet

And knots the tongue ; Rath-ripe and Purple-hued.

And thou, O Rhoetic wine ! I search for song

To hymn thee duly ; nathless seek thou not

To vie with our Falernian cellarage.

Strong Amincean, who the homage claims

Of Tmolus and imperial Phance ;

And small Argitis wine, which rivals both

For bulk of must and power to last the years.

Nor can I pass thee by, O Rhodian grape !

Dear to the gods and to the second dish ;

Nor, Bumast with exuberant clusters, thee !

But numbers lack to mark each name and kind,

Nor boots it of a truth to tell their tale.

Methinks the man, who sought such numbering,  
Would list to reckon up the grains of sand,  
Whirled by the West winds over Libyan wastes,  
Or, when the wilder passion of the East  
Falls on our argosies, would count the waves  
Which the Ionic ocean rolls ashore.

But every tree springs not in every soil,  
Willows are native of the streams ; the marsh  
Bears alder in its ooze, and stoney braes  
The barren ash, whilst myrtles most delight  
In the sea fringes ; and your vineyard loves  
Broad sunny slopes, and yews the icy North.

Behold the ends of the earth tilled for men's use,  
From where the eastern Arab makes his home  
To where the painted Scythian dwells, and mark  
How every tree claims its allotted land :

India alone black ebony doth bear,  
And Saba boasts her frankincense alone.

What need to tell thee of the dewy balm  
That perfumed stems distil, or berried fruit  
Of evergreen acanthus? Ethiop groves  
All silvered with soft down? or how they comb  
A silken fleece from leaves in far Cathay?  
Or of that utmost corner of the world  
Hard by the sea, where Indian forests grow  
Such that no shaft may cleave its airy way  
Above the tree-tops?—and, i' faith, that race  
Is not behindhand in the Bowman's craft.

Media, again, bears citron sour of juice  
With clinging savour, blessed antidote  
To purge the deadly poison from our bones  
Whene'er fell step-dames brew the baleful cup,

Mingling their simples with unholy charm.  
In truth a stately tree, and for its form  
Most like a bay ; yea, truly did it shed  
The selfsame scent abroad a bay 'twould be.  
Its leaf defies all tempest, and its flower  
Clings close beyond compare ; wherewith the Medes  
Heal noisome rheums and old men's lack of breath.

Yet neither wealthiest Media's citron groves,  
Nor the fair stream of Ganges, nor the tide  
Of Hermus flooding thick with gold, can mate  
Thy glories, Italy ! Nay, not the Ind,  
Nor Bactra, nor Panchaia's plain that reeks  
With frankincense.

For in this land of ours  
No oxen, breathing flame, have ever ploughed  
A tilth to sow the giant dragon's teeth,  
Nor human harvest bristled through the plain  
With serried spears and casques.

But here abound

The plenteous fruits of earth, and Massic wines,  
And olive trees, and goodly herds of steers ;  
Hence comes the mettled courser to the wars ;  
Hence thy white kine, Clitumnus ; hence the bull,  
The sovereign sacrifice, who oft has led,  
Besprent with lustral waters, templewards  
The victor chariots of triumphant Rome.  
Here dwells eternal spring, here summer reigns  
O'er months beyond her sway ; twice doth the flock  
Bring forth, twice doth the orchard fruit.

And here,

In this our land, no savage tiger prowls,  
No angry lion's whelp, no wolf's-bane tricks  
The hapless gatherer, no scaly snake  
Hurries its monstrous rings along the ground  
Or winds in circling coil those vasty lengths.

Yet more. What stately cities without count,  
Look you, are ours! What handicraft of art!  
What wealth of towns niched high on craggy steep  
By mortal hand! What rivers gliding past  
Those time-worn battlements!

Or shall I tell  
Of the great seas that wash our either shore?  
Or sing the spacious glory of our lakes?  
Thee, Larius, the mightiest, and thee,  
Fretting thy billows with the very roar  
Of the sea's self, Benacus?

Will you hear  
Anon of havens, and the giant bar  
That dams the Lucrine—how the ocean chafes  
With thunderous might what time the Julian port  
Rings with the baffled flood, and Tuscan tides  
Come surging up the channels of Averne?

This is the land whose veins were wont erstwhile  
To stream with silver and with copper ores,  
And flush with plenteous gold.

In this same land  
A very breed of heroes was begot :  
Men of the Marsi, and their Sabine kin,  
The Volscian pikemen, and the hardy tribe  
Of Ligures.

Here Marcii, Decii sprung,  
Noble Camilli, and the Scipios twain,  
Twin thunderbolts of war :  
And, greatest, thou,  
Triumphant Caesar, who, fresh laurel-crowned  
In Asia's utmost zone, dost bar betimes  
Yon craven Indian from our Roman hills.

Hail ! land of Saturn, mighty mother, hail !  
Mother of noble harvests—noble men !  
For thee, O mother, shall my Muse essay  
The glory and the art of olden time,  
For thee unseal the holy springs of eld,  
And through the towns of Rome chant Hesiod's lay.

Now turn we to the temper of our soils ;  
Their force, their colour, and their power to bear.  
And first of land unyielding to the plough  
And churlish mountain-sides, and brambled fields .  
Of stones and hungry marl—these make the joy  
Of long-lived olives, such as Pallas loves.  
And for a sign see oleasters spring  
Thick on the selfsame spot and strew the ground  
With wilding fruit.

But where the soil is fat  
And joyous with sweet wells, or where the plain,  
All lush with grasses, teems with plenteousness,  
Such land as we are oft-times wont to view  
Far down the mountain in some hollow vale,  
Where drips the rivulet from steepy rocks  
And brings the kindly ooze—a plain, forsooth,  
Which breasts the south and cherishes the fern,  
That foe to ploughshares—here your grape shall wax  
Full lustily anon, with bounteous floods  
Of wine, here shall your clusters amply grow,  
And brew such liquor as from golden bowls  
Flows for the gods' delight whene'er we hear  
Hard by the altar the sleek Tuscan blow  
His ivory pipe, and on the groaning dish  
Men offer up a steamy sacrifice.

But if your bent be rather to the kine,  
To nurture calves, and lambs, and kids that mar  
The tender shoots, then seek the fertile meads  
Of far-away Tarentum, and such plains  
As luckless Mantua lost, where snow-white swans  
Feed on the sedgy brooks ; your herds shall find  
No lack of pasture there or limpid wells.  
Nay, you shall see the very grass they crop  
Throughout the lengthy day renewed afresh  
By the cool dews of one brief summer night.

Dark soils and rich beneath the ploughshare's stroke  
With crumbling mould—a character we ape  
By tilth—are best for corn ; nor shall you view  
From ever another field so many wains  
Dragged homewards by the slowly-pacing steers.

Nor is that soil inept, whence husbandmen  
Have, all impatient, cleared the trees, and hewed

The longtime cumbering groves, and, root and branch,  
Despoiled the ancient homestead of the birds,  
Who from their nests forlorn speed to high heaven,  
What time the field, once their's and nature's, gleams  
Burnished by ardent shares.

And, look you, now,

How the lean gravel on the hillside slope  
Can barely furnish pasture for the bees  
Of lowly lavender and rosemary.

How marl and meagre sandstone, honeycombed  
By dusky water snakes, declare the soil  
Beyond all other earths a toothsome feast  
For coiling serpents and a labyrinth  
Wherein their brood may lurk.

But land which fumes

With subtle mist and drift of dewy reek,  
Which drinks the moisture deep into itself

And yields it back at will, which clothes the lawns  
With an unfailing robe of fresh young grass,  
Nor frets the iron ploughshare with salt rust,  
That is a land whose vines shall wreath your elms  
With lavish vintages, whose olives teem,  
Whose soil your husbandry shall surely prove  
A friend to kine, a servant to the plough.  
Such land does wealthy Capua till, such land  
Lies round about Vesuvius and her heights,  
Or where capricious Clanius threatens doom  
To lone Acerrae.

Now will I disclose  
How you shall tell your soils.

Say that you seek  
If land beyond its wont be light or dense—  
Seeing this loves the corn and that the grape,

Ceres the denser, but the slacker mould,  
Lycæus, thee.

Choose you a fitting spot  
And bid a pit be deeply dug in ground  
Closely compact : then shovel back the earth—  
Ay, every jot—and tread the surface smooth.  
And if through lack of stuff it fail to fill  
The utmost brim, be sure your soil is light,  
More apt for cattle and the generous grape.

But when the earth refuses to return  
From whence it came and overtops the pit  
In its replenishment, 'tis dense with clay ;  
Beware the unyielding clod, the stubborn ridge,  
And yoke your sturdiest team to break the ground.

Whilst for that salty soil which folk term sour—  
Hapless for harvest, hostile to the plough,

Whose vines gainsay their lineage, fruits their name,  
This shall its token be :

Go pluck you down

From where they hang beneath the smoke-stained  
roof

Your osier baskets woven close that serve  
As colanders for wine. Therein bestow  
This evil earth with sweet spring water mixed  
And press it to the full ; and you shall see  
The moisture slowly ooze and giant drops  
Drip through the wicker-work ; whereof the taste  
Tells a plain tale in truth, and twists awry  
The mouths of those who tempt its bitterness.

Rich soils thus briefly shall you know ; for mark  
How, as you toss from hand to hand the mould,  
It crumbles never, but in handling cleaves  
Pitch-fashion to the palm. Surpassing tall

Grow grasses in dank earth whose nature teems  
Beyond due measure.

May my field be quit  
Of such abundance, nor my firstling ears  
Burgeon in over-lusty soil !

Or light,  
Or heavy lands their character betray  
By their sheer weight. A single glance foretells  
The blackness of the earth, or what the hue  
Of this or that ; but cold's a curse most hard  
For our conclusions. Only now and then  
Malignant yews, dusk ivy-tods, and pines  
Vouchsafe a hint.

Now, having heeded well  
These counsels, be ye sure in ample time  
To throughly bake your soil, nor stint the plough

Trenching the very mountain-side, nor fail  
To lay your upturned furrows longtime bare  
In the north winds, or ever you implant  
The joyous children of the vine.

Those fields  
Are best whose crumbling mould lies loose—a task  
Which winds and chilly frosts partake, and he,  
The brawny delver, tossing to and fro  
His scattered acres.

Now those husbandmen  
Whose caution naught escapes, search out betimes  
Twin soils, whereof one nurses for your trees  
The infant vines, the other by-and-by  
Shall welcome them out-planted row by row,  
Lest a too sudden shift to novel earth  
Estrange the nurseling grape.

Nay, but they note  
(So each should stand again as erst it stood,)  
The heavens' aspect on each several stem :  
Here, that it bore the brunt of southern suns,  
There, that it turned its back upon the pole,  
Of such great moment are these youthful moods.

Whether hillside or plain best fit the vines  
Let your first question be. If 'tis a plain  
Whose fertile field you purpose for your plot,  
Plant close ; no laggard shall the wine god prove  
In such abundant growth. But if your choice  
Be for broad slopes of mountain, or a soil  
Crested with knolls, then largely spread your ranks.  
Nathless, each alley with its straight-drawn path  
Must, as you set your trees, most nicely square :  
Even as a legion in some giant fight  
Deploys its cohort train, and stands to arms

In open field with due array of war  
Ere the grim clash of battle has begun,  
Whilst all the landscape ripples like a sea  
Of radiant brass, and Mars between the hosts  
Hovers in doubt,

So let your vineyard through  
Be meted out in equal avenues.  
Not that alone our idle fancy feeds  
On such a sight, but rather that the land  
In this wise only deals a share of strength  
To all alike, and boughs find space to spread.

Now may you ask what depth your trenches need.  
Well, for a vine I would not fear to trust  
A slender furrow. Trees strike deeper down,  
Into the very bowels of the earth :  
And chief the sovereign oak, which sends its roots

So far towards Tartarus as towers its crown  
Up to the winds of heaven.

Hence nor gales,  
Nor rain, nor winter storms can lay it low :  
Unmoved it stands and triumphs, as time rolls,  
O'er many a generation, many an age  
Of mortal men by the sheer force of life ;  
Stretching afar this way and that a might  
Of branchèd arms, whilst its midself upholds  
Burdens of shade.

Let not your vineyards slope  
Down to the sunset ; nor amongst the grapes  
Plant hazel bushes ; nor for cuttings choose  
The topmost shoot that decks or tree or vine—  
So mighty is their love of earth ; nor wound  
With blunted knife your scions ; neither set

Wild olives in their midst. For oftentimes  
Some heedless husbandman lets fall a spark  
Which, by the oily rind at first concealed,  
Seizes the solid trunk, and shoots aloft  
Amongst the leafage, waking with a roar  
The skyward air: then, wending on its way,  
Lords it o'er branch and utmost bough supreme,  
Wraps all the boscage with a cloak of fire,  
And, close compacted in a murky reek,  
Belches black clouds to heaven.

Most dire its rage

When from on high storms swoop upon the woods,  
And the gale fresh'ning hurries flame on flame.  
Lo! then the vines are stricken in their roots,  
Nor shall the knife restore them, nor the earth  
Teem, as of yore, with all their wealth of green;  
Only wild barren olives, bitter leaved,  
Reign in their place.

Let none, however shrewd,  
Win you, what time the north wind blows, to stir  
The hardened soil, for now doth winter keep  
Your lands close pent with ice, nor lets the slip  
Implanted strike its frost-bound root deep down  
Into the earth.

'Tis best to plant your vines  
When with the blush of spring comes homing back  
The silver bird by snakes abhorred ; or when,  
Ere the first frosts of autumn, the swift sun  
Scarce touches winter with his chariot steeds,  
Though summer-time be spent.

Oh, but the spring !  
The spring that loves the green-wood and befriends  
The forest trees ! In spring the heaving earth  
Craves for the fruitful seed.

Then from on high

Comes Father *Æ*ther, the omnipotent,  
And pours his fertile showers into the lap  
Of a glad spouse, and quickens all her yield  
One in his vastness with her vasty self.

Then the lone coves ring with song of birds,  
And the herds couple on their wonted days.

Our bounteous mother earth teems with her kind,  
The meadows loose their bosoms to the warmth

Of western breezes, and a gentle dew  
Hangs over all ; so that the tender herb

Fears not the coming of each new-born sun,  
Nor do the young vine-branches dread the assault  
Of southern tempest, nor the north wind's might,  
Driving the torrent rains across the sky,

But break in bud, unfurling leaf on leaf.

Methinks 'twas such another day—and such  
A drift of days—that in the dawn of time  
Lit a young world.

For surely then 'twas spring—  
The spacious earth was basking in the spring—  
The chill east winds forbore their wintry blasts,  
When first the cattle drank in draughts of light,  
When first man's iron race upreared its head  
From the hard field, when first the beasts were  
sent  
To fill the woods, and stars the sky.

In truth,  
Natures so dainty could not brook the strain  
Did not such blessed respite intervene  
Between the cold and heat, and kindly heaven  
Vouchsafe this gracious welcoming to earth.

But to our work.

Whene'er you plant your land  
With tender scions be ye sure to strew  
Rich compost round, and hide them well with earth,  
Or bury by their roots rough-coated shells,  
Or bibulous sandstone. Thus in years to come  
Shall waters filter down, and subtle airs  
Steal through the soil, and hearten all your shoots.

Some men there are who shield the plants with stones  
And massy tiles, bulwarks against the rain,  
Or sultry dog-star as he cleaves the fields  
That gape with drought.

When your young vines are set,  
Needs must you break the earth about their roots  
Once and again, and ply the stalwart hoe,  
Or by deep dint of ploughshare stir the soil,

And up and down the very vineyard drive  
Your labouring team.

And next must you prepare  
Smooth wands, and shaftlike branches, whittled white,  
And staves of ashen wood, and sturdy forks,  
Whose might withal may teach your vines to soar,  
And scorn the gale, and thread the latticed boughs  
Up the high elms.

Now while your new-born leaves  
Wax with the spring of life fail not to spare  
Their tender growth ; and while the glad shoot leaps  
Towards the heavens, and with unbridled course  
Speeds through the limpid air, forbid the knife  
E'en for the trunk itself, but here and there  
With prudent finger-tips pluck out the buds.

When by-and-by your vines have crept aloft,  
Winding with lusty stems around the elms,  
Clip ye the leaf and trim the branch : no more  
Do they abhor the steel. The time has come  
To play the tyrant, and to curb apace  
Those wandering boughs.

Moreover must you weave  
Fences of wattle, wards against the kine.  
This chiefly so whilst yet the leaves are green,  
And all unconscious of their woes to come.  
For to harsh winters and imperious suns  
Are sent for our undoing further plagues.  
The vineyards furnish sport for woodland ox  
And troublous roe ; or pasturage for sheep  
And greedy heifers. Since no winter dew,  
Crystalled in hoary rime, no summer sun,  
Smiting amain the thirsty cliffs, can vie

In mischief with those flocks, whose venom'd teeth  
Gnaw at the stem, and brand it with a scar.

Ay, for this very crime we offer up  
A goat to Bacchus at his frequent fanes ;  
Hence came old Tragedy to tread our stage ;  
And hence the sons of Theseus first ordained  
Prizes for rustic wits at village fairs  
Or round the crossway altars ; hence again  
The goatskins, oil-besmeared, whereon youths dance  
In their gay cups, adown the velvet sward.

And hence Ausonian farmers, sons of Troy,  
With artless rhymes and laughter free as air  
Make holiday, and don their fearsome masks  
Of hollow bark ; and call on thee aloud,  
Bacchus, with joyful song.

Then do they hang,  
High in thy honour on some lofty pine,  
The tiny images that swing and smile.  
Whose virtue clothes the vineyards round about  
With lavish harvests, bids the hollow vale,  
The steepy mountain gorge—yea, every spot  
Whereto the god inclines his comely head—  
Teem with abundance.

Hence we celebrate  
The solemn rites of Bacchus, and we chant  
Our fathers' litanies, and bear aloft  
Platter and cake, and to his altars lead  
The victim goat by the horns, whose luscious flesh  
On spits of hazelwood anon shall roast.

Yet further care your cherished vines demand—  
A never-ending task ; for year by year,

Thrice and again, must all the ground be tilled,  
And the clods broken with the constant hoe,  
And the trees lightened of redundant shade.

So shall your toil come alway circling back  
As the years roll along their wonted grooves.

For lo ! no sooner have the vineyards shed  
Their lingering foliage, and the chill north wind  
Shattered the leafy glories of the woods,  
Than your keen farmer looks to next year's work,  
And, with a stroke of Saturn's sickle, prunes  
And harasses his vines anew, and moulds  
Their fashion as he cleaves.

Be ever first  
To trench the soil, and first to bear away  
And burn the branches that you lop, and first

To house once more the vine poles, but be last  
To garner in your vintage.

Twice a year

The shadowy leafage overwhelms the vines,  
And twice dense growth of weeds and throng of briars  
Creeps o'er the yield : or this or that alike  
An irksome task. Ay, your broad acres serve  
To brag about ; but when you come to plough,  
The less the better.

Likewise must you cut

Lithe shoots of woodland butcher's broom, and reeds  
That grow along the marges of the stream,  
Nor shall the wilding osiers spare your toil.  
Nay, when the vines are bound, and sickles lie  
Idle amongst them ; when, the day's work done,

Your last man in the vineyard sings aloud  
Over the utmost rank—why, even then  
You needs must rack the land, and stir the dust,  
And tremble lest Jove strike your purpled grapes.

Far otherwise the olives ; for they need  
No fostering care, nor seek the pruning-hook,  
Nor mordant rake, when once their roots have gripped  
Deep down the soil, and learned to brave the winds.  
For the kind earth, once by the ploughshare riven,  
Yields sap in plenty to the youngling plants,  
And, by the selfsame aid, lush crops anon.  
Wherewith do thou in mellow fulness breed  
The olive, dear to Peace.

And you shall see  
How fruit trees, haply conscious of the might  
Of their young boles, and heritage of strength,

Leap skywards of their own accord, nor crave  
Our succouring a jot.

Meanwhile around  
The trees are groaning with their bulk of fruit,  
The haunts of woodland birds are all ablaze  
With blood-red berries ; fodder for the herd  
The bosky clovers yield ; from overhead  
Pines fling their torches, shedding ample flames,  
To feed our fires o' nights.

And shall mankind  
Forbear to plant the land and grudge their toil ?

Why dwell on lofty trees ? Even lowly brooms,  
And willows furnish foliage for our kine,  
Shade for our shepherds, wattles for our crops,  
And provender for bees.

What joy to view  
Cytorus with its sea of wavy box,  
Or groves of Locrian firs ! What joy to mark  
Fields that owe naught to tillage or the care  
Of any man !

Ay, barren forests crown  
The peak of Caucasus, which wild east winds  
Are rending—riving ceaselessly ; and yet  
Each has its harvest—timber good and true—  
Pines for our ships, cedars and cypresses  
To deck our homes :

Whence also farmers carve  
Spokes for their wheels and rollers for their wains,  
And bend the shallop's keel. Lo ! sallows yield  
Withies in plenty, and the elms their leaves ;

Myrtle and cornel-tree, the friend of war,  
Strong shafts for javelins ; and yews are bent  
For Ituraean bows. Nor does smooth lime,  
Nor box, obedient to the busy lathe,  
Ploughed by the sharpened steel, due form refuse.  
And the light alders, launched upon the Po,  
Swim o'er its violent flood ; and swarming bees  
Are caged in hives of bark, or hollow trunk  
Of some dead oak.

What gifts does Bacchus bring  
Of like account ? Bacchus ! Why, he has proved  
The cause of very crime. 'Twas he, forsooth,  
Maddened the Centaur-folk, and made them bow  
The knee to death—Rhaetus and Pholus too.  
And eke Hylaeus with his giant bowl  
Flaunting the faces of the Lapithae.

O happy, happy Toiler in the fields,  
Thine own rare happiness didst thou but know,  
Spoilt child of Fortune !

For thy simple wants,  
Far from the clash of armoured battle, Earth,  
The ever-faithful, out of a willing lap  
Scatters her ready store.

For thee, in truth,  
No sumptuous palace with imperial gates  
Pours from its countless halls morn after morn  
A flood of courtiers ; true, thou mayst not gloat,  
With open mouth, o'er jamb and lintel pranked  
With costly tortoise shell ; nor gaze and gape  
At tapestries wrought with strange conceits of gold,  
Or statues moulded of Corinthian bronze ;

Nor are thy snowy fleeces stained with dyes  
Of Tyrian purple; nor thy limpid oil  
Marred with the scent of cinnamon;

And yet

Unbroken peace—a life that knows no guile,  
With treasures manifold are thine. For thee  
The spacious freedom of the open fields,  
Caverns, and living lakes, and dewy dales,  
And lowing cattle, and sweet slumber-time  
Under the forest trees; and woodland glade,  
And haunt of bird and beast; and rustic youth,  
Patient to labour, bred to scanty fare;  
And reverend age, and worship of the gods.  
Methinks the feet of Justice lingered here  
Last as she fled from earth.

But for myself

First, and above all other aims, I pray

The gracious Muses, whose poor priest am I,  
For the great love which thrills my inmost soul,  
That they may take me to themselves, and teach  
The starry ways of heaven, the sun's eclipse,  
The travail of the moon ; whence earthquakes spring;  
What forces move the unfathomed, turbulent sea  
To burst its natural bonds, and sink again  
Back to the tranquil deeps ; why winter days  
So promptly quench their sunshine in the waves,  
And what slow spell delays the lingering nights.

But if this may not be—if I, perchance,  
Am too faint-hearted, and too chill of blood  
To scale the summits of the universe—  
Then let the meadows and the running brooks  
Be my especial joy, and bid me love,  
Without a thought of fame, the streams and woods.

O let me dwell amid the grassy downs  
That fringe Spercheus, or beside thy slopes,  
Taygetus, whereon the Spartan girls  
Keep Bacchic feast! O who will set my feet  
In coolest vales of Haemus, sheltered o'er  
By leafy canopies of boundless shade?

Happy the poet unto whom is given  
The secret of created things: who casts  
Pitiless death and dread beneath his feet,  
And scorns the roar of greedy Acheron.  
But happy none the less is he who holds  
Communion with the woodland gods—with Pan,  
And old Sylvanus, and the sister Nymphs.

He cares not for the honours of the State,  
Nor kingly purple; neither fears the brawls  
That break the bond of brotherhood; nor heeds  
O

The swoop of Dacian legions from the banks  
Of mighty Rome, nor all her neighbour kings  
Doomed to defeat; nor ever does he weep  
With him that wants, or envy him that hath.

But plucks the fruitage that the boughs bestow,  
And takes the gifts the willing meadows yield.  
Blind to the forum of the madding town,  
The rigour of the iron-hearted law,  
The Courts which chronicle the deeds of Rome.  
Whilst otherwhere men fret the darkling seas  
With venturous oars; or headlong dash to arms;  
Or win a secret way within the walls  
And palaces of kings.

And this man sacks  
Cities, and havocks all their household gods  
Just for a jewelled cup, or dainty couch  
Of Tyrian purple.

Here is one that digs  
A grave to shroud his wealth, and, couching, broods,  
Over the golden hoard ; another stares  
Up at the Rostrum in dumb ecstasy ;  
Whilst this, like one bewitched, listens agape  
As waves of plaudits through the theatre sweep  
Again and yet again, from all alike,  
Plebs and Patricians.

Others vaunt themselves  
Whose hands are dabbled with a brother's blood,  
Barter away the hearths and homes they loved  
For lifelong banishment, and seek anew  
Another country under other suns.

Meanwhile our simple farmer tills the land  
With the curved plough : his task year after year,

The mainstay of his country and his home,  
His children's children, and his droves of kine,  
And faithful steers.

Nor ever do the months  
Slacken their yield, but teem with copious fruit,  
With young of cattle and with sheaves of corn,  
And heap the harvest in the furrowy field  
Till the barns burst.

Then comes the winter-time ;  
His olive mills are busy with the grist  
Of Sicyon's berries, and his swine troop home  
Sleek and well-liking from their fill of mast,  
And arbute flings him largess in the woods.

Or autumn comes and lays its varied store  
Down at his feet, whilst on the cliffs above  
The vintage basks and mellows in the sun.

## THE GEORGES OF VIRGIL

Ay, and sweet little ones shall climb and cling  
Close to his lips ; and spotless virtue guard  
The innocence of home.

His cows around  
With pendulous udders promise stores of milk,  
And fat kids tussle on the merry turf  
With combatant horns.

And he, the lord of all,  
Keeps holiday, and lies upon the grass,  
Whilst boon companions crown the bowl with flowers  
Around the sacred fire, and pour the wine  
With due libations ; calling unto thee,  
Lord of the wine-press, Father of the vine.

Then does he set a mark upon the elm,  
And make a match for wingèd javelins

Amongst his shepherds ; or perchance they bare  
Their hardy bodies for some wrestling bout  
In country fashion.

So in days of yore  
Lived the old Sabines ; and so Remus lived,  
And Romulus, his brother : in such wise,  
Etruria waxed in strength ; and so, O Rome,  
Didst thou become the glory of the world,  
And in one city's battlement embrace  
Thy seven hills.

And so did Saturn live  
King of the golden age : ere Jove had grasped  
The sceptre ; and ere graceless man had slain  
His faithful ox, and battened on its flesh.

Whilst yet no warlike clarions woke the world,  
Nor iron anvils rang with hammered swords.

But lo! our course has journeyed far and wide  
O'er boundless plains; 'tis time to unyoke our steeds,  
And loose the harness from their reeking necks.







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